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WORDS FOR THE HOUR.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "PASSION-FLOWERS."

c Julia Ward Howe 1

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
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THE LYRIC I.

Have pity on the lyric I,
The poet's *eye* that finely rolls,
And holds convertible domain
From burning Cancer to the poles.

Not of itself th' incendiant spark
That sets men's thoughts to smoke and blaze;
It is a spirit fire-glass,
That kindles with concentred rays.

It hath a weary work to do,
Fifth of all sounds that sing or sigh,
Third of the great things I O U,
It speeds, the monographic I.

Its pain and evil I have seen
Where heart and manhood withering lie,
And said: "Good friend, you cannot heal,
Till you consent to lose this I."

Empiric if our notions be,
Or with Hegelian learning wise,
Or set on simplest common sense,
There is a difference in our I—s.

The philosophic I, is not
The I that any man may meet
On errands of familiar use,
Or held to greetings in the street.

The I that cannot choose but stand
Great rights and wrongings to assert,
Is not the I that wastes the meal,
And leaves hiatus in the shirt.

* * *

Nor must the sorrows of my song
Stand for the household weights I bear,
Who thankful every morn return
To tasks beloved of thought and prayer.

Nor such as share my working sphere,
Plagued with my music to the soul,
For Giant foes that shut the world
With false and tyrannous control.

Eyes may be sad at prison bars
To whom the sun is glad and free ;
And placid depths of Being show
The storm-clouds of Humanity.

And as one emblematic cup
From lip to lip doth fervent move,
So make my poet vase a boon
For all who weep, and think, and love.

POEMS.

THE SERMON OF SPRING.

I.

Now that the Spring ushers smiling the full, glad Summer,
As the bride-maiden the bride, to grow modest beside her,
"Here is my sister," she saith, "but more fashioned and perfect,
Come to a fuller growth in the heart of the Highest,
She the decision, I the intent of His kindness—
Her receive, O ye mortals, for good and fruition.
And as my blushes are lost in the glow of her beauty,
So let your pleasures give place to the earnest of Wisdom.

Wisdom, the true joy extatic, made good through upholding
The burthen of noontide, with multiform splendors o'ercharging
Man's weak brain, which resists them and therefore is manly.
Ye who walk happy to-day, who unclasp the light vesture,
That to the heart the warm sunshine may do its glad mission,
That through the breast may strike rapturous joy and expansion,
Ye will have sighs to give forth ere the mantle fold closer;
Ye must be sadder and wiser ere Summer shall leave you."
What should the Summer prove, what the brunt and the bearing,
When the fair Spring-tide doth leave us a sting in her blossoms?
What shall the action be, what the striving and tearing,
When the great heart of a Nation, in wildest commotion
Shakes with its terrible heaving the green earth beneath us?

Heart like a woman's, (the heart is the woman in all things,)
That, through false guidance betrayed from its own nobler instincts,
Wakes yet to consciousness, learning too late the foul treason,
Cries thence for succor, if there be justice in heaven.
What are these passions, the fiendish, that rush into transport?
What are these voices, the earnest, that rise to rebuke them?
What is this anguish? the poor heart grows passive and breathless,
Tightened with terror lest they, the malignant, should conquer,
Lifting its hope to the Godhead that, brooding above us,
Says of the Chaos, this too is my righteous appointing.
Yes, but the Chaos knew the command of its master,
Sleeked its black roughness, and sank at his feet like a watch-dog.
'T was but the threshold I kept of thine uncounted treasures;

Take them unwasted, Master, bring out their fair beauties;
Fling to the wondering deep the new sun and the planets,
Build in the infinite largeness the heavens that shall praise Thee.
Oh! had it risen instead with a purpose persistent;
Said: I am somewhat, and that which I am I continue.
Why should I yield my tumultuous joy of rebellion,
That thy law should remodel my ancient dominion;
That thy will, which I care not to know, be accomplished?
With what a smile had the lips which I dare not imagine
Struck the rude outlaw to mute and immediate homage!
How had the outstretched finger vouchsafed its calm guidance,
Till the dark pulses should leap to the thrill of His music!
So, from the wilder tumult these symbols would picture,
Let the torn heart of my country turn, silent and steadfast,
Seized with the courage of good, till the uproar receding
Be as the thoughts of a child, who, admonished at bedtime,

"Thou hast been froward," creeps nearer the breast of his mother,
Strangely recalling the passionate cries of the morning.

II.

Who are these that sweep on to the House of the People,
Cherished like song-birds, warm with their own downy wrappings?
Splendors of feathers we see, as of laces and diamonds;
Splendors of beauty, that shame the adornment of either.
Met by the Marshal, and led to the smile of the Magnate
Bland in his greeting—blandly they please him with curtseys.
Fairest of women tender white hands for his touching;
Men of the haughtiest wait for the nod of their patron.
Has he betrayed the trust that was left to his swearing?
Hush! 't is the Chair Presidential to which we do homage;
Every man cringes where any man may aspire.
One I discovered, haply not seen by my fellows;
Young and a Virgin, wearing her fillet of oak-leaves,

Wearing the green nodding plumes of the Court of the Prairie,
Gyves on her free-born limbs, on her fair arms shackles,
Blood on her garments, terror and grief in her features.
Oh! she was weary, upholding the crown of her promise,
Keeping the watch and the ward that brave men should have kept her.
Oh! she was weary with crying aloud from the West-land,
Faintly and fiercely: "Brothers! will none of you help me?"

Where with hum and confusion scarce tempered by music,
The brilliant assemblage thronged their chief man for his virtue,
Sudden she stood, like a guilty ghost at a banquet.
"I am Kansas," she shrieked, and her hand gave its menace,
"Kansas," and seized the crisp locks for a terrible shaking.
"Me dost thou murder—me dost thou sell in thy shambles.
Coined from my blood is the gold that should keep thee in power.

Thou hast heard my loud shrieking—hast counted my struggles;
Scarcely I hold from my heart the death wound of thy Bravos.
Tremble," she cried, "tho' the battle seem thine for a season,
Not a drop of my blood shall be wanting to judge thee—
Tremble, thou fallen from mercy, ere fallen from office;
The heart of the Nations shall loathe ere it gladly forget thee,
Known for thy vileness alone, and the sorrow it wrought us."

While she yet spake, from the heaven God's thunder had fall'n;
And I heard: "The crime, not the paltry offender so stirs us."

III.

Take heart, thou lone one—a champion leaps to defend thee,
Armed with the loftier issue, the art and the moral;
Eloquent lips, and the integral heart of Conviction,
Powerful still, when the arm of the spoiler has crumbled.

Doctrine of Right, and the Old World tradition of Freedom—
Doctrine of Justice, thank God, no New England invention;
Known to the Ancients, known to the Gods and their poets,
Known to great Tully, whose pillars of perfect marble
Stand in the temple of Truth, his remembrance for Ages.
There shall thy record be, Knight of the wronged and the helpless;
There shall thy weapon be kept, with the motto: "I hurled it."
How hast thou hardened the loving heart and quick feelings,
To stand up and speak the great spirit-dividing sentence,
To stand, a mark for the thief and assassin to aim at.
More than our envy, more than thy hope was thy guerdon—
Setting the seal of thy blood to the word of thy courage.
If but the pure of heart in a pure cause should suffer,
Sumner, the task thou hast chosen was thine for its fitness.
Never was Paschal victim more stainlessly offered,
Never on milder brow gleamed the crown of the martyr.

Stand thence, a mark for the better and nobler ambition;
For they are holy, the wounds that the Southerner dealt thee.
Count them blessed, and blessed the mother that bore thee.
Would that the thing I best love, aye, the son of my bosom,
Suffering beside thee, had shared the high deed and its glory.
Shall we bend over those wounds with our tears and our balsams?
Tears warm with rapture, balsams of costliest clearness.
Take thy deserving then—wear it for life on thy forehead;
Crowned with those scars shalt thou enter the just man's heaven;
Crowned with those scars shalt thou stand in the record of heroes.

If earthly counsel were vain, should the heavens befriend thee.
Sinking Orion, cast out in the wrath of the tyrant,
Calls not in vain on the dumb heart of Nature to help him;

Lo! the deep comes to his aid, and its monsters upbear him;
Hesper stoops over the Ocean her long shining tresses
Till he is drawn by them up to the zone of her beauty;
And, like fair sisters, the stars close around him forever.

IV.

Scarcely the hush of horror gives way thro' the country,
Ere from the Westland breaks the wild war-cry that grieves us.
Here the oppressor has come, he has reaped his rude harvest,
And the black ridges are left in the desolate cornfield.
Low lies the village; the people stand, dull and disheartened,
Wondering what miscreant shall march with the banner of Freedom.
Oh! thou blue banner of God, with the stars of thy promise,
Wave in thy fury, avenge this usurping and insult!
Crack! thou crystal! let flame from the high empyrean,
Sweep from the outraged earth the vile chief and his legions.

Lawrence is fallen! Our friends and our brothers are murdered!

And your smug President soothly subscribes their death warrant.
Man! walk not forth, lest the beasts of the meadow upbraid thee—
True to their office, fulfilling the task God appointed.
Even the mastiff shall greet thee with howls of derision—
He who, left with the treasure, forsakes not its keeping—
Mocking the thief, giving battle till one of them perish.
Yea! let the meanest thing that is faithful deride him;
Let stocks and stones thank God that they cannot do treason.
Set him aside, my country! be great and impeach him!
Write out his dark account, tell his deeds as he did them.
Chosen to serve the people, his servants shall bind them.
Sworn to uphold the law, he will cheat and degrade it.
Blood has he counselled—not once but again and often.
Blood shall he have, poured to God with a holy intention—
True blood of Seventy-Six, that brave men have bequeathed us—
Left to be spent as they spent it, freely for Freedom.

Hark! E'en the pulpit rebukes the slow drowse of the anthem,
Praising of God, amid actions that praise him in nowise.
Here some brave priest lifts his voice; the far rapine and bloodshed,
And murderous manners at home, move his eloquent finger.
"Shame on you Christians," he cries, "if with such you have friendship,
And, if you be not ashamed, let your Pastor disown you."

Thanks! good pastor, our tribute of thanks for thy fervor—
'Tis but a spark—let it kindle the wide congregation
With that clear redness of shame which hath grace before Heaven,
With that good tingling that rouses men's slumbering virtue;
Each confessing to each, we were careless and brutish;
Sat unawakened by, while they hewed down our brethren.
Thus, by the sorrowing face shall the heart be made better.
This is as things should be—let the priest lead the people,

Stamp them, as melted wax, with high feeling and purpose.
Who hath anointed the man who shall stand looking Godward,
That he should pipe to the tune of their wanton wishes?
Oh! what a heathen Church shall we have if men's passions,
Traffic and greed, are to measure the text for the preacher.

V.

Finite is human help—many words are a hindrance.
Words for the muses should bear the slow pressure of patience;
Scarcely one leaves them content, after utmost endeavor.
Visit me not with your anger, ye powers poetic,
If, in my hotness and haste, I have jarred your sweet fetters.
But, while your presence I feel, thrilling through and above me,
Listen a moment longer; suspend your high sentence,
(Towards which I leap, when the daring is more than the danger,)
While with the name that has grown to a presence ideal,

As with a sound of sweet music, I pass from your hearing.

Washington! thou art set as a symbol of greatness,

Of courage that boasts not, of honor that knows not temptation.

Thee all men praise—not a town in thy multiplied country

That hath not thy name and thy bust for its empty Valhalla.

How is it with thee, calm looking down from the death-cloud?

Is not thy soul astound with the praise and the practice?

Dost thou not point to the niches, the wreaths, and the statues,

Asking: "What is it ye honor, who know not my maxims?

Mocking my spirit, when patriots catch its far echoes.

Wherefore these splendors?—the skill of the draftsman and sculptor—

Marbles, whose whiteness stands not for your whiteness of virtue,

Filth of the market defiling the innermost temple—

Wherefore these columns?—this dome that shall pierce the high heaven?

Were not the narrow walls wide enough for your mercies?

Was not the low roof too high for your poor aspirations?
Can you not see that the heart of your city is meanness?
Give it another name, lest it stand to defame me."

VI.

No, not Washington, springtide must end my brief lesson.
Sweetness of Nature alone for these woes can console us.
Blessed is he who takes comfort in seed-time and harvest,
Setting the warfare of life to the hymn of the seasons.
In the garden, the whispering walls are our refuge,
Closes with music its gate on the outer confusion.
The heaped green grasses rise up in their congregation
Lifting their heads to answer the sunshine with gladness.
Birdlings singing aloft in the blossom-hung branches,
Tell of the promise in which they bring up their young households,
Tell of the faith in which God has deserted them never.
So—we will lift our heads—these men too are our brothers—

They should be gathered with us in the fold of the Future.
Heaven enlighten their hearts, ere we close for the death-tug,
Flinging them far from our bounds with their wrath and their rapine,—
As the man tears from his side the beloved who betrays him,
Lest her soft vices insensibly ruin his virtue,
Lest he too fall, undermined by the white tooth of falsehood.
Keep the promise of Spring, O! thou Father of fathers—
Give us, great God, beyond these anarchic convulsions,
The high, synthetic repose of thy progress and order.

TREMONT TEMPLE.

Two figures fill this temple to my sight,
Who e'er shall speak, their forms behind him stand;
One has the beauty of our Northern blood,
And wields Jove's thunder in his lifted hand.

The other wears the solemn hue of night
Drawn darker in the blazonry of pain,
Blotting the gaslight's mimic day, he slings
A dangerous weapon too, a broken chain.

Oh! what a thing it was to sit and hear
Our Sumner pour the torrent of his soul;
The broken thread and parcel of the crowd
Knit to one web—one passion-colored whole.

We chid the tedious clock that told the knell
Of minutes, swollen to hours, that break and die;
"It is not so—Time listening waits for him—
Be still!" we said, and passed its record by.

The evil thing he smote at, waited long
To hurl its vileness at that Master brain.
'T will be a proud day when we gather here,
(Grant it, dear God!) to hear his voice again.

And, Douglass, thou shalt own the white man's debt
To thee and thine, half cancelled, by the rood;
The country flashes with the Northern fire,
And Sumner blest the banner with his blood.

SLAVE ELOQUENCE.

WHY shouldst thou speak? stand, and lift up thy hands,
That bear, before high heaven, a nation's crime,
That touch with fire th' electric chain of truth,
Left darkly rusting in our careless Time.

Stand, with the burthen of thine ancient lot
Poising thy pliant figure, with a smile
That hath a dark and bitter memory in't
Of suffering unavenged—woe worth the while!

Stand, like the prophet's Christ, so grief-possest
That silence shall afflict us more than sound;
Express in marble passion, motionless,
The anguish of the fratricidal wound.

Thy cause needs no appealing—wrongs like thine
Nature makes dumb with greatness—do they crave
The lowliness of Pity? from all hearts
Thou hast it with this thought: here was a Slave.

Nay, speak, thou shadowy Image! thou art fain
To ease the throbbing fulness of thy heart,
From lips that, not ungraciously, essay
The white man's language, not the white man's art.

Thou wilt not stoop to curses impotent
And wild—such weakness is not for the free—
With modest gesture and with manly phrase
Make clear thy right—adorn thy liberty!

Nor turn to tear thy tyrants—thou hast learned
A lesson holier than wrath or hate;
Since the borne sorrow leaves a bosom-rift
Where gentle Charity may penetrate.

Thy speech doth to the stronger race aver
Some deathless favors—Shakspeare's thought and rhyme,
The knitted bond and logic of the law,
And Jesu's words, the treasure of all time.

Speaking, he kept the measure of our wish,
But we had deemed him eloquent, unheard,
For, looking on the wronged and rescued man,
His presence pleaded stronger than his word.

AN HOUR IN THE SENATE.

Falls there no lightning from yon distant heaven
To crush this man's potential impudence?
Shall not its outraged patience thunder: "Hence!
Forsake the shrine where Liberty was given!"

Shall he stand here, with this defiant face,
And clench the fist, and shake the matted hair,
As if his brutal prowess centred there,
Mocking at Justice, in her holy place?

See where he smiles! the sophism falls so pat!
Suits better with his ends than finer stuff—
Goes furthest, with the speech assured and rough—
Is false as Hell's deceit—well—what of that?

"The strong shall rule, the arm of force have sway.
The helpless multitude in bonds abide—"
Again the chuckle, and the shake of pride—
"God's for the stronger—so great Captains say."

Beyond the narrow freehold of our sight
Methinks, God smiles upon a different wise,
And to the agonizing thought replies:
"Be of good courage—God is for the right."

Rings the wild menace thro' the Congress Halls
To die out harmless—hath an error friends?
Nay, hirelings, who protect it for their ends;
And fly to shelter, when its falseness falls.

Yet, rise to answer, chafing in thy chair,
With soul indignant stirred, and flushing brow.
Thou art God's candidate—speak soothly now,
Let every word anticipate a prayer.

Gather in thine the outstretched hands that strive
To help thy pleading, agonized and dumb;
Bear up the hearts whose silent sorrows come
For utterance, to the voice that thou canst give.

Theirs is an eloquence that cannot reach
The coldness of our distant sympathies,
Then, pluck them bleeding for the country's eyes,
Speed with the wings of universal speech.

Give us their story in untutored phrase—
The idly-learned of the earth are here,
To hide with Reason what the heart makes clear,
While Truth stands stript, to meet th' Eternal's gaze.

And let the scoffer's feeble shaft be spent—
Such shall stand silent in the better day,
As faithless Sarah stole her shame away,
When the stern guest rebuked her merriment.

So the true word corrects the stormy school.
God's angel, stooping, rests his ruffled wings—
For this is one of many questionings,
And one has spoken well—*The right shall rule.*

THE SENATOR'S RETURN.

How shall we greet thee when thy task is o'er,
Thy martyr task of weariness and pain,
When eyes that wept thy suffering, stark and sore,
Shall see thee, stately and erect again.

There should go forth, to crown thy lordly way,
Glad youths and maidens, and the elders sage,
While garlands green and milk-white robes recall
The peaceful triumphs of the Golden Age.

We shall be touched with heavenly Charity,
And walk as Brothers, reconciled and glad,
Yielding a mournful pity to the wretch,
Whose weapon gave the bloody accolade.

With something of the dear and tender joy
With which we think to greet our own above,
The pain and sharpness of the struggle o'er,
And every vexing doubt resolved in Love;

Shall we behold thee, scatheless of the Grave,
But with the halo of the Just in sight;
Bearing a rescued Goddess in thine arms,
Thyself immortal, wed with deathless Right.

SLAVE SUICIDE.

Should one led up to death, or fearing worse,
Those tortures that make dying a release,
Anticipate the final boon of peace
By taking on himself the murderer's curse?

If with unwavering purpose arm'd, his hand
Could let the doomed captive from his breast,
And with one purple pang reconquer rest,
Were it not Roman, Brutus-worthy, grand?

No! by my faith in God, I would not spare
My flesh one blow prophetically due,
Nor snatch a respite, nor for mercy sue,
Lest I should wrong th' Omnipotence of prayer:

Lest I should rob my soul of high repose
Earned by such racking labor of the frame,
Or spare a miscreant heart the bootless shame
With which men see a victim's eyelids close.

Pursue, to depths of agony unknown—
Strip, smite him, gyved and bound, that cannot flee,
At one sure limit God doth set him free,
And aimless Fury mars a form of stone.

Had this thy creed been sanctioned, we had lost
Those men and women patient unto death,
Twined in our very rosary of Faith,
God's jewels, God's, who registers their cost.

Triumphant, these abode the test of fire,
Were scourged, were branded, broken on the wheel,
Pierced with sharp fangs of beasts, or sharper steel,
And fainted not in hope, nor in desire.

Nay, thou hadst rifled thus, with hand profane,
A crowning glory from the Crucified;
Where were the healing from the wounded side,
If his own hand the costly life had ta'en?

He bore his martyrdom as God did mete,
Bequeathed it, drop by drop, and part by part,
Ours, with the blissful brokenness of heart
In which we kneel to kiss the sinless feet.

Smile then upon the scourge, devoted friend!
There comes a glory, wreathed with every stripe,
His meed who waits till his reward is ripe,
And crowns God's perfect purpose in his end.

BALAKLAVA.

They gave the fatal order, Charge!
And so, the light Brigade went down,
Where bristling brows of cannon crown
The front of either marge.

Traced all in fire we saw our way,
And the black goal of Death beyond—
It was no moment to despond,
To question, or to pray.

Firm in the saddle, stout of heart,
With plume and sabre waving high,
With gathering stride and onward cry,
The band was swift to start.

They took the field with solemn eye.
However wild the deed they knew,
However whoso bade, should rue,
Their business was, to die.

'T was the old gallant English blood,
And many a shadowy ancestor,
Guarding his sculptured arms afar,
That day in memory stood.

At serried gallop on they press,
Swerveless as pencilled lines of light,
And where a steed turns back in fright,
That steed is riderless.

They charged in high, immortal ire!
The war-cloud swallowed them, the young,
The brave,—a handful widely flung,
But of heroic fire.

They fell, unconquered, nor in vain.
No, by the sacrificial cost
Of Faith and Courage, never lost,
Theirs doth the day remain.

Reft heart of love, contain thy wound!
Flash, eyes! though lips press close and pale!
Still, mourners! let us hear no wail
Above the trumpet's sound.

Nor wait the sire to weep the son
That bore his fortune and his pride,
Nor shall the mother's wish divide
From these, her cherished one.

But tearful England holds her breath,
Listening, uncomforted, their fame,
Who, in the greatness of her name
Rode glorious unto death.

TO FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

I AM not cold, my sister, in applause
Of one whose presence honors Queenly guests;
Who wears the noblest jewel of her time,
And leaves her race a nobler, in her name.
I do not swell thy triumphs with a wreath,
Because thy weight of crowns is burthensome;
And that which henceforth least can be thy need
Is human praise, the cordial of weak hearts.
But, lest my silence should dispraise myself,
I'll help its meaning with a parable.

A scene is present to my mind, intense
With all the joys the lyric drama gives;
Its heroine, fainting 'neath her fragrant spoils,
Deafened with plaudits, vexed to answer them,
Since none approach the conscious gift of Art
From whence these splendors, like a fountain, flowed,
Implores the moment to forsake the stage
Whose right is what she pictures, not herself.

But lo! where one of tardier impulse sits
With other blossoms that are hers, by right,
And waits a vacant moment for his gift.
She is adorned beyond her youth's desire,
No place about her for a leaflet more;
So, with a sudden thought, he flings the prize
To scatter, where the patient chorus stand,
A willing back-ground to her high relief.

Strange joy and wonder seize those weary hearts
That do their heavy work unrecognized.
"What, not illustrious, did you think of us,
Mere stony echoes of your nightingale,
And Genius, that doth call us for her use?
You knew us faithful in the prayer, the march,
The funeral dirge, and crowned us? God reward!'

Methinks, a Prima Donna of your mind,
However earnest for her due repose,
Would turn the eyes that con to-morrow's task
Beyond this evening's laurels, bright'ning, back,
And send this Praiser happy to his home
With one approving look, whose warmth should say:
The flowers thus sent, fell nearest to my heart."

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AND HER PRAISERS.

If you debase the sex to elevate
One of like soul and temper with the rest,
You do but wrong a thousand fervent hearts,
To pay full tribute to one generous breast.

Mercy belongs to us from ancient days—
Yea—when the Human and Divine did part,
God left the boon of pity to the world,
And left it garnered in a woman's heart.

In the old warrior times of feud and fire,
When the fierce world in armour watched and slept,
Maidens, high-hearted, left the sumptuous court,
And with pure hands the sick man's pillow kept.

In those rude ages, they were fain to shield
Their holy virtue 'neath monastic vows,
Now, England's daughter, without fear or blush,
To the wide world her valiant zeal avows.

Nay, frailer women, strong in love alone,
Have followed as the blast of battle led,
Pressing on spear and sword the ill-armed breast,
Content to perish where their soldier bled.

She has sprung forward, an enfranchised stream
That runs its errand in the face of day;
And where new blessings mark its course benign,
Men yield approval to th' unwonted way.

But she had freedom—hearts akin to hers
Are held as springs shut up, as fountains sealed,
The weighty masonry of life must part
Before their hidden virtue be revealed.

Women who weave in hope the daily web,
Who leave the deadly depths of passion pure,
Who hold the stormy powers of will attent,
As Heaven directs, to act, or to endure;

No multitude strews branches in their way,
Not in their praise the loud arena strives,
Still as a flameless incense rises up
The costly patience of their offered lives.

Such love bears not the sunlight on its breast,
But by the devious conduit underneath,

It reaches you, unrecognized, unknown
Save in the brow suffused, and dewy breath.

Then count not the heroic heart alone
In those whom action and result make great,
Since the sublime of Nature's excellence
Lies in enduring, as achieving Fate.

FURTHERMORE.

We, that are held of you in narrow chains,
Sought for our beauty, thro' our folly raised
One moment to a barren eminence,
To drop in dreary nothingness, amazed;

We, dwarfed to suit the measure of your pride,
Thwarted in all our pleasures and our powers,
Have yet a sad, majestic recompense,
The dignity of suffering, that is ours.

The proudest of you lives not but he wrung
A woman's unresisting form with pain,
While the long nurture of your helpless years
Brought back the bitter childbirth throes again.

We wait upon your fancies, watch your will,
Study your pleasure, oft with trembling heart,—
Of the success and glory of your lives
Ye think it grace to yield the meanest part.

Ev'n Nature, partial mother, reasons thus:
To these the duty, and to those the right;"
Our faithful service earns us sufferance,
But we shall love you in your own despite.

To you, the thrilling meed of praise belongs,
To us, the painfuller desert may fall;
We touch the brim, where ye exhaust the bowl,
But where ye pay your due, we yield our all.

Honour all women—weigh with reverend hand
The worth of those unproved, or overtried,
And, when ye praise the perfect work of One,
Say not, ye are shamed in her, but glorified.

PRIVATION.

Of all the workings of the Law Divine
Privation is most wearily outworn;
Harder than wounds that bleed, or pangs that tear,
Tis Life's high treason—generous Hope forsworn.

In Want is woe, and sad vacuity,
Tis Aspiration doubting of its crown;
Yet who that ever panted in th' ascent
Would sit to rest, or turn to cast him down?

To him who presses on, at each degree
New visions rise, beyond the dim unseen;
Soon happier love, soon nearer hope shall come,
And only this slow suffering lies between.

Some men have wrung strange glory from the cloud
That was a prison to their loneliness;
And, feeding other hearts with rare delight,
Kept for themselves their hunger and distress.

The blind majestic bard, whose tearless eyes
Were patient in the weariness of night;
And one, his brother in a kindred art,
Bereft of melody, as he of light;

Fruition was not for them to the sense—
The world for one, for one the swelling tone;
"We work—" they said, and in high toil abode,
And: "we have wrought," they uttered, and passed on.

My Milton! thou whose holy heart forbore
The doubtful rite of uncongenial shrines,
But gave the perfect tribute of its faith,
Before thee now the true Shekinah shines.

Seeking a nearer moral for my song,
I find two poets of the latter days,
Branded by Nature with the fatal gift,
Pilgrims from birth, but in divergent ways.

This rode his blood's high mettle to the full,
Goading satiety with unblest wine;
This to a meeker measure moved along,
Palm-heralded, as Christ in Palestine.

This, like a meteor, streamed abroad in air,—
This, like a star, abode in distant light;
The one scared noonday with his crimson glare,
The other was the beacon-guide of night.

The one with lordly gesture trod the earth,
Gathering all pleasure, innocent or ill;
The other bared his reverend brow to heav'n,
And gleaned from Nature with a sober will.

The one awoke the echoes of the Past,
Those sacred voices of the marble halls,
And bade them bear a demon-strophe wild
To mock, afar, his gray ancestral walls.

The other was penurious of his days
In those fair hills, beneath that friendly heaven;
His were the deep, synthetic harmonies,
The joy of task and recompense God-given.

One, in a wild convulsion ceased to be,
And if he went to bane or bliss, none knew;
The other stood, serenely crowned with age,
And steadfast passed to God, if God be true.

Oh! at the Muse-crowned temple of the one,
And at the other's lonely sepulchre
Pause thou, my soul, and ponder deeply thence
The paths of Fate, and choosing, dare not err.

Hast thou the high, heroic heart to walk,
Or wait, receptive of the distant tone!
Or wouldst thou sit to revel, and crush out
Lifeblood of others, mingled with thine own?

Wilt thou rest guardian of these simpler loves,
Leading the dull, the passionless, the weak?
Or, desperate, rush to Lido's charmèd shore,
To fling wild kisses on a hireling's cheek?

Oh! treasured in the hand that cannot fail
Let thy poor life, through want and waiting lie,
Radiant in anguish, comforted of tears,
If the deep voice but whisper: it is I.

ON RECEIVING A VOLUME PUBLISHED AFTER THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR.

They bring a volume, precious with thy name
And latest records—all that Love can save.
While the snow falls upon the two-years' grave
Where thy dear ashes careless lie of Fame.

What for thy bitter loss shall make amends
In these sad pages? Wert thou yet on earth
One happy hour should give us thrice their worth,
So far the living word all else transcends.

I did not ask such notings of thy thought;
Holding more dear, with Love's own jealousy,
The vivid doctrine that thou gavedst me,
When flashing look, and fiery gesture taught.

Thus bring they, gathered from Samaria's well,
A droplet that avails no thirst to slake,
Yet men shall deem it blessed, for his sake
Whose shadowed sunlight on the waters fall.

These, thy recorded musings, wake again
The heart's deep longing for a music gone;
Thy vibrant voice, whose clear attempered tone
Was like the martyr's rapture-cry in pain.

Shattered lies now the heav'n-strung instrument—
Sure, Death must grow harmonious on the spot;
While, at the grave that holds, but has thee not,
Sad Echo, waiting, o'er the urn is bent.

To that far shrine, through all the Winter's woe,
With hands enclasped, that strive to lift on high
Affections born and centred humanly,
In solemn, measured cadence would I go;

Making thy grave a station to mine own,
Seeking in depths of prayer some deathless thought,
Some jewel of the soul, divinely wrought,
To hang where purest gems have place alone.

But, held by ties that let me not depart
On Grief's wild sweeping pinions any whither,
I can but send my pilgrim wishes thither,
Folding thy dear, dumb volume to my heart.

Not each for each can live, but each for other,—
Only the dead in God are isolate;
He shall accord me patience for my fate
Whose holy rest doth gather thee, my Brother.

VIA FELICE.

'T was in the Via Felice
  My friend his dwelling made,
The Roman Via Felice,
  Half sunshine, half in shade.

A marble God stands near it
  That once deserved a shrine,
And, veteran of the old world,
  The Barberini pine.

A very Roman is he
  Whom Age makes not so wise
But that each coming winter
  Is still a new surprise.

But I lodged near the Convent
  Whose bells did hallow noon,
And all the lesser hours
  With sweet recurrent tune.

They lent their solemn cadence
To all the thoughtless day;
The heart, so oft it heard them,
Was lifted up to pray.

And where the lamp was lighted
At twilight, on the wall,
Serenely sat Madonna,
And smiled to bless us all.

Those voices, illustrating
Their bargains, from the street,
Shaming Thought's narrow meanness
With music infinite.

Those men of stately stature,
Those women, fair of shape,
That watched the chestnuts roasting,
The fig, and clustered grape;

All this, my daily pleasure
That made none poor to give,
Was near the Via Felice
Where Horace loved to live.

I see him from the window
That ne'er my heart forgets,
He buys from yonder maiden
My morning violets.

Not ill he chose those flowers
With mild, reproving eyes,
Emblems of tender chiding,
And love divinely wise.

For his were generous learning,
And reconciling Art;
Oh! not with fleeting presence
My friend and I could part.

His work of consolation
Abode when he was gone,
A tower of Beauty lifted
From ruins widely strewn.

Our own inconstant heavens
Were o'er us, when we met
Before a longer parting,
Not seen, nor dreamed of, yet.

'T was when the Spring's soft breathing
Restores the frozen sense,
And Patience, dull with Winter,
Is glad in recompense.

There, in our pleasant converse,
As by one thought, we said:
This is the Via Felice,
Where friends together tread.

Again, my friend turned seaward,
Again, athwart the wave
He flung the wayward fortune
His fiery planet gave.

And, in that heart of Paris
That hides distress and wrong
So cold, with show and splendor,
So dumb, with dance and song;

Drawn, by some hidden current
Of unknown agony,
To seek a throb responsive,
Our Horace sank to die.

Oh! not where he is lying
With dear ancestral dust,
Not where his household traces
Grow sad and dim with rust;

But in the Ancient City
And from the quaint old door,
I'm watching, at my window
His coming, evermore.

For Death's Eternal city
Has yet some happy street,
'T is in the Via Felice
My friend and I shall meet.

DILEXIT MULTUM.

Could I portray thy face, illuminate
With the high glory that it had for me,
Or deathless carve, in marble's sainted state,
The record of thy vanished majesty;

Or could I, like the grief-inspired of old,
Dream out some Minster of divinest form,
Arch within arch, to cherish and enfold
Love's passing holiness from waste or worm;

Or could I rear towards heav'n a life of good,
Whose date were from our meeting, faultless, strong,
With every thought sublimed and prayer-endued,
The annals of my days should praise thee long.

But gifts like these I have not, to embalm,
Enshrine, englorify thy memory;
Only, from stammering lips, the fitful psalm
Whose music wavers, when it speaks of thee.

Yet take my offering—Nature's simple skill
Shall stead for thee the perfect form of Art,
And my love's record, like to Mary's, dwell
Rich in the shattered vase and lavish heart.

THE PARK.

When the earliest star of evening breaks the gloom of twilight skies,
And to meet its fresh effulgence, we lift up day-wearied eyes,
Eyes on which Life hangs its burthen, Sleep can loose as well as Death,
Then a spirit, passing near me, pauses, breathing gentle breath.

Come thou where the giant shadows shall enclose thee with their arms,
Where the silence shields from sinful thoughts as angels guard from harms;
Not with laughter and companions, flaunting in the light of Day,
Come, a vesper Nun at even, to remember and to pray.

Come with hands clasped full of meekness, let thy stately robings fall
Till the dust of grief besmirch them, wear Love's cypress, bear his pall;
Bring thy perfumes—let them mingle with the costly gift of tears,
They should solemnize a sorrow that makes poor the coming years.

Here where, broidered like a blazon on the scutcheon of a shrine,
Gainst the fading sky so pearly, sable shows the tapering pine,
Here where dies the wind the softest, like hushed pinions of a dove,
I will fold thee, oh belovéd! in the fervor of my love.

I will lead thee where we wandered, in the time long fled away,
Thou shalt rest where we were wont to shield us from the summer day;
It was gorgeous in its beauty, but a joyaunce more divine
Filled the heart of one whose fingers bore the tendril clasp of thine.

Leave thy tremblings, leave thy doubtings, let thy sins
stand out of sight;
They are quick enough to seize thee—Law and
Conscience claim their right;
Rest one moment from the summing thy offences and
thy meed,
Leave the weary task to Love whose grace is wider
than thy need.

Gather tender thoughts about thee, gather holy hope
and power,
Call the names of all thy dear ones, let them keep with
thee this hour,
Hold the shadows of thy children in thine arms and
on thy knee,
With the rapture, dear and costly, that attends
Nativity.

Soft, the angels close around thee—so, thou walkest
dream-pursued,
Golden cords of help unwinding, in the circling
solitude,
Seest stars immortal kindling from the failing suns that
set,
And believest, though thy friend is gone, his love
surrounds thee yet.

Passing hence, thou envyest nought of theirs that rule
this fair domain,
Since treasures that are hid to them, to thee unlock
again ;
Joy of dear and duteous mourning, joy of vagueness
and of gloom,
Joy of Friendship that deserved to leave no fellow in
its room.

FANNY KEMBLE'S CHILD.

As I was fain to wile a summer's day
With Shakspeare's Juliet folded in my lap,
And for her accents, strove to call up thine,
An unexpected music to my thoughts
Answered—the matchless laugh of Maidenhood;
While looking from the pondered page, I saw
Of the strange growths of Time and Nature, one.
It had thy brow in little, and thine eyes
But new created, offering gentleness;
Ev'n thy brown locks, with youth's half risen sun
Still gilding them aslant. "Who should this be
But Fanny Kemble's Daughter?" said my heart,
Ere others came to tell her parentage.

Tears waited on the vision. Woful child!
Thy Mother scarcely knows thy countenance,
Remodelled from its baby lineaments;
And I, a stranger, hold with grasp profane
A hand, that she should almost die to touch.
Wherefore is she thy Mother? unto her

The Poet's word: "Bring forth male children only,"
Should seem the fittest sentence. As I mused,
I heard, but heeded not, her careless talk,
Till mine own children climbed upon my knee,
Whom with a Mother's foolery I fondled,
Calling them Puss and Pug, and Slug, and Bear,
Berating them with mimic violence,
And silly buffets, to be coaxed with kissing.
As with a swift remembrance, said the Girl,
"Why, that is like my Mother!" and grew sad.

Oh! many-passioned Woman—fervid soul!
Thou, rich in all save Meekness—strong in all
Save that strong Patience which outwearies Fate,
And makes Gods quail before its constancy.
Which was forgotten in thy gifts of birth?
Of all the powers the greatest only—Love.

What voice makes music in the childless breast
Which thine own Diapason cannot fill?
Has Conscience ne'er a moral for the void?
Do thy forsaken ones cry out to thee
For the brave nurture left aside one day
To follow stormy feeling round the world?
Or gatherest thou, from thine own infancy,
Nature shall take thy glorious foundlings up,

Proving a wiser and a tenderer nurse
Than thou, self-tortured, and self-comforting?
Oh! wander where thou wilt, thou must return
From the flushed conquests of a thousand fields,
Vanquished at last of sorrow, as creeps back
From her wild course the wounded Lioness,
That Death may find her, crouching near her young.

Peace wait upon thee where thou seekest it—
At the world's altar, or the Convent grate.
But while thou walkest, Time doth follow on
With lessons that are slow and great to learn.
Lessons of human weakness, and life's woe;
The impotence of Anger, the divine
Of Pardon, and th' unconquerable power
Fixed in the waiting, philosophic eye.
As Fate's kaleidoscopic angles turn
Thou shalt behold great burthens poised and held
In smallest grasp, thro' Wisdom's leverage.
Thou shalt allow what patient hearts attend
The helpless cradle, without hope or love
Between its narrow bounds, and God's immense.
What painful fingers spin the duteous web
With little comfort, for the weal of such
As give no passing smile in recompense,
But take the garment to their frigid souls,

Saying, "it scarcely warms me." Thou shalt learn
What Women, glorified thro' tears, have gone
Uncanonized of men, to that best heaven
Where God consoles His martyrs.
One who walked
From the throne's splendor to the bloody block,
Said: "this completes my glory," with a smile
Which still illuminates men's thoughts of her.
When such as we supremely love and trust
Meet the last struggle on their outward way,
'Tis the last look of deathless-loving eyes,
The parting gesture of unconquered Faith,
That o'er the bitter waters beckon us,
Wringing fond hearts with vague imaginings,
Making unblest the limits that forbid
Aught save our longing souls to follow them.

Grief hath its wanderings—pass and pardon mine.
Thine was the lot of Woman, only thou
Wert more than Woman in thy haughty will,
And less than Woman, in humility.
Battling for higher tasks, and loftier praise,
Thy matchless office was unknown of thee.
A helpful partner? whence are mightiest laws
But of opposing forces, greatly wed?
A nurse of Babies? what is Nature else?

See, the stars nestle in the down of Night,
And, from the calm of one wide Mother-breast
Doth holy sleep reconsecrate the world.

Did torture go beyond the powers of life,
Could one not, dying, look such mild reproach
As looks a slave in his tormentor's eyes,
Who sees, thro' tears and blood, God's pardon near?

The tree that sheds its blossoms ere their time,
Bears not the Autumn glory of its fruit.
The drop that in its cavern cannot wait
The infiltration of a thousand years
Shall never shine, a diamond. Earth herself,
Hoarding rebellion, were chaotic still,
Foiled of her beauty, joyless, purposeless.
Oh friend! Life is creation to the end,
And we beget ourselves in agony
A thousand times, to one ancestral soul.

I cannot be thy Teacher, nor would ask
Unwilling lips to take their text from mine.
But wonder seizes on my thoughts, and fear,
When, in the Drama of our destinies,
A soul like thine is summoned to the front,
And maddens with the passion of its part.

The gaslights flutter, and the benches whirl,
The music sobs its insufficiency ;
Some shout applause, some sit convulsed and still,
While heavenly Art, with awful eyes intent,
Waits to pronounce the sentence of the world.

THE SMOOTH PORTRAIT.

How lightly hast thou learned of human grief!
Thy flesh has 'scaped the sacrificial knife—
Men quote the pride of a too happy life
To set thy even virtues in relief.

The brow's serenity—the head thrown back
That the audacious eyes may smile to heaven;
The mouth, with not one tender muscle riven
By the impatient torture of the rack;

A joy self-continent, that overflows
The marble of the face, for Beauty's sake;
Heroic laughter, such as Day might wake
In a God's heart, with rosy, ringing blows.

Oh! happy soul—upon thy placid breast
The worn eye sinks, and has so much of calm,
While the clear voice is medicine and balm
To heal the aguish fever of unrest.

Yet are there closets of the inner shrine
Where we are bidden from the flowery day,
To stand and give the awful voices sway,
And, holding by God's hand, must part from thine.

THE ROUGH SKETCH.

A GREAT grieved heart, an iron will,
As fearless blood as ever ran;
A form elate with nervous strength
And fibrous vigour,—all a man.

A gallant rein, a restless spur,
The hand to wield a biting scourge;
Small patience for the tasks of Time,
Unmeasured power to speed and urge.

He rides the errands of the hour,
But sends no herald on his ways;
The world would thank the service done,
He cannot stay for gold or praise.

Not lavishly he casts abroad
The glances of an eye intense,
And, did he smile but once a year,
It were a Christmas recompense.

I thank a poet for his name,
The "Down of Darkness," this should be;
A child, who knows no risk it runs,
Might stroke its roughness harmlessly.

One helpful gift the Gods forgot,
Due to the man of lion-mood;
A woman's soul, to match with his
In high resolve and hardihood.

MYSTIC—NOT MYSTERIOUS.

Me shalt thou quicken unto life renewed,
Thou living brightness, falling on dead faith;
Scattering my patient gloom, as one returned
From golden travels his glad lesson saith,
And, telling of far climes, and faery pleasures,
Makes rich the hearer's heart with fancied treasures.

A circling star that comes with counted years,
Bringing the heavens unnumbered to our sight,
Startling our twilight with immortal joys
For which we wrestle with the spell of night,
Fling off the measured burthen of our sleeping,
And walk the deathless fields in angels' keeping.

Nay, be not mortal, do not bend to me,
Nor nod too friendly from thy shining plain;
I am with my own lowliness at home,
That thou shouldst stoop to mete with it, were pain.
So, let me hold thee in thine own belonging,
Where reverential eyes can do no wronging.

Since last this gem was in our crystal set,
It hath a lustre doubly great and wide ;
As all pure essence gathers purity,
A lesser planet is his duteous bride ;
Ah ! does she know his glory as I breathe it,
And cherish more—her heart should faint beneath it.

There are who throng thy footsteps, while I sit
Intent on oft-remembered words of thine ;
Thou growest familiar to their careless sight,
And yet thy presence is not theirs, but mine ;
A boon held from me, for its very nearness—
A joy beyond all joys, of dread and dearness.

No more—too costly is my love for thee
To sow in words that other hearts may reap.
Love shall be pardoned if he husband love,
Hoarding the inward sweetness he would keep
To feed the hunger of unlightened hours—
Who misses it ? the bee's theft from the flowers.

No more—a music long forborne came near
To wake the frost-bound pulses of delight ;
And thy pale brow, and weirdly golden locks
Passed as a glorious warning of the night.
Keep my vows, Spirit, in thy distant heaven ;
I have thy pledge of peace—my heart is shriven.

MAUD.

Baby with the hat and plume,
And the scarlet cloak so fine,
Come where thou hast rest and room,
Little Baby mine.

Whence those eyes so crystal clear?
Whence those curls so silky soft?
Thou art Mother's darling dear,
I have told thee oft.

I have told thee many times,
And repeat it yet again,
Wreathing thee about with rhymes,
Like a flowery chain;

Rhymes that sever and unite
As the blossom fetters do,
As the Mother's weary night
Happy days renew.

Like a silvery vision thou,
Twinkling, as a distant star,
And the lustre on thy brow
Shineth from afar.

Like a sunbeam in the room,
Creeping near thy mother's heart;
Shade of discontent or gloom
Comes not where thou art.

Could I paint thee with a word,
Pattern thee in dainty phrase,
Thou transfigured humming-bird,
Gem with spirit-blaze!

Like a gracious prophecy
Sped where darkling caverns yawn,
Like a cheerless winter sea
Flushed with crimson dawn;

Thine unwonted coming brought
More than Nature's rapture-right;
From the depth of darkness, taught
God could bring the light—

Fate that visits us and grieves,
Parts from us, love-reconciled,
And the wrack of sorrow leaves
The glory of the child.

PARTING FROM BABY.

The bud's mysterious beauty
The flower doth seem to lose,
The tender springtide greenness
The ripening sun must use;
For fruits of nobler daring
Fall blossoms of the heart,
And thou must change, my Baby,
All perfect as thou art.

What ghosts of bitter Fancy
My child has chased away;
First with her helpless pleading,
Then with her fairy play;
A child of consolation
Whose presence fair and pure,
Made in these months of nursing
So much of heav'n secure.

But I must lose thee, Baby,
As sprite is lost in soul,
As drops that glitter, singly,
Lie gleamless in their whole—
Life waits to take thy measure
Of bosom and of brain,
Fits for thy tiny muscles
The aye-increasing strain.

Thy sins that are so pretty
Must give sad virtues place,
And many a weary errand
Restrain thy wanton grace;
Till, for a ruder harvest,
Thy charms shall ripened be,
And Baby, grown a Woman
Is wooed away from me.

Oh! think of me, my darling,
With thine own child at thy breast;
How soft I soothed thy wailing,
How jealous, watched thy rest,—
And read these foolish verses
That keep the mother's eye
From the small empty cradle
Where Baby's wont to lie.

BABY'S RETURN.

Welcome again to thy father's roof—
Thou dreamer of innocent dreams!
Flower of pure and constant breath,
Shadow of sunniest gleams!

With the eyes that speak for the untried lips,
And the little, stammering tongue,
And the arms, like an amulet of price,
O'er the Mother's shoulders flung;

And the curls that ring, like silver bells,
With the voice's silvery chime,
Each counted and combed, none broken yet
In the weary tangle of time.

* * * * * * * *

Thy beauty shall train its blossom wreath
O'er the homely fetters of care,
While the household angels that cling round thy path
Shall lighten the burthen of prayer.

LOVE IN EXILE.

Since ye have banished Beauty from my soul,
I wander in a faint and drear amaze;
Gone are the ancient, the familiar ways,
Strained the fine bonds of sufferance and control.

The utterness of sorrow none can know
Who have one help, assured, tho' distant far;
One fiery love, concentred to a star—
Night should be sombre that such stars may show.

They venture evil that they little guess,
Who hide that shining mercy from our eyes;
What though it mark a dreamer's paradise?
It is a world 'twixt us and nothingness.

Since they are gone, the blissful sights and sounds,
All hideous forms of ill assail my mind;
I hear the Demon's subtle speech behind,
I see the Present's atheistic bounds.

And then, I cast a shuddering, pitying look
Upon the fall'n—perhaps their virtue strove
To bridge th' abyss with daring and high love,
And, failing, perished in the leap they took.

In this divorce from Beauty lies a wrong—
I must deny her, I who hold her faith
Deep in my heart, and fervent unto death,
While she is outlawed from my sight and song.

My mortal frame is welded to her might,
And my soul worships, as a captive does,
Who murmurs holy words 'mid heathen foes,
While cruel hands forbid the happy rite.

A sentry, forced to keep a foreign door,
A soldier to an alien banner sold,
A priest to whom the shrine is void and cold,
Are of the things men mock at, or deplore.

Eager to check, and tireless to reprove,
Pause, ere you scare the meanest from his right,—
God gives to each his measure of delight,
To every nature its appropriate love.

MORNING.

I'll have thee greet me in thine early hours;
The dew of morning thrilling in thy words,
And the first music of the wakened birds
That pant at noon, and hang their heads at even;
Thou, radiant in the first surprise of heaven,
And the sweet shock of re-created powers,
Shalt welcome me, with thought and hope returning,
Ere Day has set his weary task of learning,
While, on the breezy vantage, standing free,
Thou renderest glad obeisance to the Sun;
Thus shalt thou meet th' impulsive bound of one
Who, thanking God for life, forgets not thee.

WHAT I HAVE.

In this world of hasty knowing, in this world of doubt and dread,
Where men die with heart unopened, and the word of Fate unsaid,
They who mete and they who gather, counting out the shining spoil,
Bade me stand and tarry reck'ning, show my wages and my toil.

Comes a beggar to the banquet where the full in heart rehearse,
He shall take his place in silence, he shall neither bless nor curse;
We must cover his short-comings with a treasure of our own—
Meet it is, in spirit-council, men's possessions should be shown.

Let me pass then, as a spendthrift, with a single golden coin
I shall never risk or barter, for a kingdom or a mine;
Not for bread would I exchange it, tho' the wolf should gnaw my bones,
Not for pearls of purest water, not for wealth of priceless stones.

Nor the child I dearest cherish, shall inherit with my land
This, my chiefest of resources, shut within a dying hand;
Not too costly for the passage of the dark and silent sea,
If but Love, star-crowned, immortal, shall afford me company.

WHAT I BEAR.

On the dark and troubled billows, lo! thou gleamest, as a star,
And we catch a pallid lustre ere we lose thy trace afar.
What the burthen on thy bosom? is it treasure, is it weed?
Glows that whiteness with thy rapture, is it deathly with thy need?

'Tis a boon beyond all asking that I bear upon my breast,
As beyond Hope's trembling urgings, direst Certainty is best.
Show your garlands, wave your banners, call your joyaunce half divine;
Yours are warm and living pleasures, but the dead, cold gem is mine.

He is mine, but not to crown me, not to take my passive hand,
Not to lead me forth, the proudest, chosen from a chosen band;
Could a ring unite our fortunes, it should wed the sky and sea,—
Draw me up from storm and battle, draw my lov'd one down to me.

He is mine by lips that speak not, by the calm, impassive brow,
By the eyes whose lids are marble, fix'd on other visions now,
By the deathless bond of sorrow, by the length of joy deferred,
By the sign of lofty meaning, and the deep remembered word.

As yon ocean-island woman many a league her husband bore,
Swimming painfully and breathless, that the dead might reach the shore;
Without brighter hope or promise to uphold her weary way,
Than to lay him where the steadfast Earth should shelter his decay;

So, thro' seas that swell to madness with the buffet of the storm,
In the arms that struggle onward, still I bear his lifeless form,
Till some wave, with swift uplifting, on the sands shall lay us both,
On the bosom of God's mercy, in the wholeness of our troth.

SUE.

She was a freak of Nature's joy,
A flow'ret wonder-pied,—
As startling as a pansy found
Black-leaved, and golden eyed.

Her voice was borrowed from the choir
That rings the vernal years;
Her temper was ethereal fire
That calmed itself in tears.

Some nameless touch of God's delight
Fell on her, as she lay
An infant, dreaming heavenly dreams,
And never passed away.

Her laughter, many-voiced and full,
Had not one scornful strain;
Her eyes, that flashed defiant mirth,
Were tender and humane.

She wore the radiance of her youth
As though she felt it not;
And while she held you with her speech,
Her beauty was forgot.

For Soul to outward Beauty is
As Sun to dawning Day,
The rosy drapery vanishes
Before the conquering ray.

Twas hers to move in fearlessness,
And throne herself at ease;
Too royal were her gifts, that she
Should condescend to please.

Oh! dread and discontent of life!
Do angels reason why
The small of soul grow smaller still,
While great hearts break and die?

* * * * * * * *

She left us in the sweet, calm June,
When all things tend to rest;
And her own bud of summer lay
Half-ripened in her breast.

It needs no name to make her known—
Her form of love and grace
Endures to marble in true hearts,
Her deathless resting-place.

Yet could I an immortal paint
In high, heroic glee,
Outvying summer winds and waves
In leaping ecstasy;

But sorrow-touched, as having borne
A woman's destiny,
Quick tears, in loving eyes surprised
Would answer: This is She.

S. P.

Unclose, sad shrine, thy shrouded breast,
Expectant to receive him;
Give, ere the dust to dust return,
All that thou hast to give him—

One hallowing rite, one parting prayer,
Deep as the heart's pulsation;
One word that points to whence shall come
If ever, consolation.

One hour that holds the cherished dead
For us, the ever dying;
We, wrung by Nature's agony,
And he, serenely lying.

Sound, wailing Anthem—lend thy voice
To thoughts we cannot utter,
Till, in the dim, mysterious void,
The wings of angels flutter.

We've laid a garland on his bier
Of fresh and fragrant blossom,
Of flowers, like him, untimely plucked
From Nature's wintry bosom.

Gather around him, faithful hearts,
So fain from ill to shield him,
Before yon reddening Sun departs,
To Darkness ye must yield him.

And thou, for whose ecstatic grief
No thought fit word can borrow;
Rise up, beneath thy widowed garb,
The royal robe of sorrow;

Move, followed close by tearful eyes,
And sobbing benediction,
To where th' inexorable gate
Shuts him from our affliction.

Bear bravely, to the last farewell—
This anguish too, is fleeting;
The path, slow winding from his grave,
Leads on, to happier meeting.

Life must resume its wonted task,
  Its care, unblest without him,—
Thou wouldst not wake him? Let him lie
  With his stately youth about him.

He lies, enshrined in holy hope,
  Embalsamed in affection,
In hope, in love, whose deathless pledge
  Is Nature's resurrection.

WIDOW'S WORDS.

How easy was't to gather and to work
With this right hand, intent to feel its way,
When the weak left a loving grasp upheld,
And tender eyes to mine were sun and stay.

The deep, enamoured heart, that ever drew
The inspiration of its life from mine;
Oh sure! the votary completes the God,
And worship concentrates the vague Divine.

I grew heroic from his faith in me,—
As a fair landscape in a mirror black,
My soul, whose lustre has no hue of light,
Was fain to give his cloudless beauty back.

Struck by an icebolt fell the palsied hand,
The mirror sickened with a ghastly breath,
And in its depth and darkness now was seen
Slow vanishing, the pallid spoil of death.

The fight is at its hottest, only now
Th' unflinching escort from my side is flown ;
The web is on my fingers, but the ray
That made its fineness beautiful, dies down.

And thus I sit, bewildered in my grief,
Or walk beneath the burthen of my doubt,
Striving, with little heart, to do and bear,
Since Time is left, with daylight blotted out.

THE NURSERY.

"Come, sing for us, dear Mother,
A song of the olden times;
Of the merry Christmas carol,
Of the happy New Year chimes;
Nor sit here, idle-handed,
To hang your head and grieve,
Beside the blazing hearthstone
This pleasant Winter's eve."

Then she sang, to please the children,
With half-forgetful tongue,
Some merry-measured roundel
Of the happy days and young;
But, pierced with sudden sorrow,
The words came faint and slow,
Till one, in childish panic,
Cried: "Mother, sing not so!"

Then all the little creatures
Looked wondering in her eyes;
And the Baby nestled nearer,
Startled at their surprise;

The voice grew thin and quavered,
Low drooped the weary head,
Till the breath of song was stifled,
And tears burst forth instead.

For misty memories covered
The children from her ken,
And down the bitter river
She dropped—no mother then;
No sister, helpmeet, daughter,
Linked to historic years;
An agonizing creature
That looked to God in tears.

But when some sudden turning
Had checked her hopeless way,
She saw the little faces
No longer glad or gay;
And as they gazed, bewildered
By grief they could not guess,
Their sympathetic silence
Was worse than her distress.

Then she tore the fatal vesture
Of agony aside;
And showed, with mimic gesture,

How naughty children cried.—
And told of hoary castles
By giant warders kept,
Of deep and breathless forests
Where trancéd beauties slept;
Weaving in rainbow madness
The cloud upon her brain,
Till they forgot her weeping,
And she forgot her pain.

'Twere well to pour the soul out
In one convulsive fit,
And rend the heart with weeping,
If Love were loosed from it.
But all the secret sorrow
That underlies our lives,
Must wait the true solution
The great progression gives.

Those griefs so widely gathered,
Those deep, abyssmal chords,
Broken by wailing music
Too passionate for words,
Find gentle reconcilement
In some serener breast,
And touch with deeper pathos
Its symphonies of rest.

A LETTER.

As notes that seek a far response,
Or moonlight, falling on the sea,
Flit past the sullen, dark profound,
Your genial greetings touch not me.

We are too far apart, and you
Too closely wrapt in blessedness,
Pressing a cup whose brim allows
No rose-leaf, in its sweet excess.

The misty realm of dreams to-night
Shall hold us, in its halls of rest—
The mighty God-soul of the world
Includes us, vaguely, in his breast;

But we can meet not, destined thou
On Joy's wild impetus to soar,
I, to rest prostrate, like the dead,
Who know nor Love, nor longing, more.

Yet wander, woodnote. for thy mate,
Or, moonbeam, wed th' inconstant sea—
The sorrow of my heart is deep,
And therefore it sufficeth me.

THE POET'S WISH.

It was a sad, mysterious joy,
The poet gave his buried friend,
That to his country's native flower
His mouldering corse should beauty lend.

Grief, to sublime of passion wrought,
A Guardian at thy tomb shall stand,
"And, from thine ashes may be made
The violet of thy native land."

It were a thought of bitterness,
In height and flush of life, to know
That, from our forms exanimate
Some baneful poison plant should grow.

Thus, happier he to whose lone grave
Nor Love, nor Fame, its tribute gives,
Than who, illustrious, leaves a seed
To harm the simplest soul that lives.

ENTSAGEN.

As One that gazes, starbound, on the sky,
Heeds not a pageant passing in the street;
As one swept onward with a favoring wind
Recks not of wild sea-treasures at his feet;

As one that walks in high, prophetic dreams,
Forgets the throb of earth, and sense of pain;
As conquerors tarry not to count their dead,
Nor lovers weigh their losing in their gain:

So, teachest thou, the soul by God endowed
With lofty impulse, and poetic sweep,
Bereft of all its earthly heritage,
Should still disdain to struggle, or to weep;

Should not defend the prizes of the heart
With straining grasp, with agonizing tears,
Nor, bruised and martyr'd, ask aloud of God
Its ravished beauty, for the scar it wears.

Life hunts us blindfold, plucking at our hands,
Mocking us on, eluding us with jeers;
Breathless, we roll our darkened eyes for help,
With heathen laughter ringing in our ears.

Thus we relinquish treasures of high trust,
Thus, weakly cling where we should render up,
When, with free sight and arm, 'twere scarcely hard
To seize and dash down the disputed cup.

But, friend, for such proud gesture one should wear
A haughty forehead, kept by beetling brows,
An eye that melts and quivers not, a lip
That hardens to the enmity it vows.

Oh! stood I thus enfranchised, long enough
To gather up each wrecked and wronged delight,
Commit them to th' abyss with holy words,
Then, tearless, front the calm, eternal night!

And oh! my womanish heart—if this were done,
I should but bend, with fixed and shaded eye,
Follow the ghosts of parted happiness,
Then, with wild tossing arms, plunge down and die.

THE BEAUTIFUL.

Thou warn'st me, I should heed the Beautiful?
Stay then—reveal it to the spell-bound sense.
Not with the eye, the ear, or heart, I feel
Man's dignity, and Nature's excellence.

I know them, as we know a word of God
Told in mysterious whispers of the night,
Which, waking, is not found, but kept in heart,
Till struggling Faith is ravished of its right.

Thus, rising from a dream, but dreaming still,
I walked, in vision-haunted maidenhood,
Fed with high fancies, all unlearn'd of life,
Save its young promise of ideal good.

I found the temple, but the shrine was bare,
The God invisible, and rapt from sense;
I wove my chaplet, waiting for the priest
Whose holy lesson should dismiss me thence.

I sat and wrought upon the marble steps,
Secure in faith and young humility,
While men passed by—sometimes a gracious one
To whom my heart said, throbbing, "Thou art he!"

But these went on, unheeding of their power—
Theirs was another rite, another feast;
Nor did my love wait on them—it abode,
Steadfast and strong, the coming of the priest.

So was my garland wreathed with little aid,
So were its petals blent too waywardly,
Wild growths put gentle garden-flowers to shame,
And poison-vines hung, trailing, from my knee.

I chose the best my scanty learning showed,
Nor ever left the consecrated spot,
But to return, with new-discovered spoils,
From hill-side villa, wood, or garden-plot.

Soon, little feet essayed to follow mine,
Sharing at will my wanderings, and my hap;
Fingers, whose sense was nicer than my sight,
Laid tiny offerings on the mother's lap.

But here she sits, still waiting, dreaming on
Of some contentment, scarce to be conceived,
Some soul of blessedness, some smile of peace,
Some utterance, heard but once to be believed.

Oh! not the features of a Grecian god,
The holiness of manhood's noblest saint,
The wisdom whose wan halo wastes the brow,
The heart full-passionate, and free from taint;

Not all this high conception, which enshrines
Divine delight in manly majesty,
Can more than shadow what that unknown Priest,
That unseen Beautiful, remain to me.

Is it a dream that he shall surely come,
And lay his hand upon these weary eyes?
At the transcendent virtue of his touch
Shall not the soul from wreck and ruin rise?

Shall I not drop my trivial task, and stretch
My hands for garlands in his bosom borne?
Shall not fresh greenness glorify the spot
Where I have dwelt, uncomforted, forlorn?

Shall I break out in weeping, or in song,
Or glow with shame, to own myself so dull,
When, as he smiles the death-film from my sight,
My heart shall say, "This was the Beautiful"?

WHERE IS THE BEAUTIFUL?

WHERE is the Beautiful? in these sharp airs?
These skies from which God sends no pleasure down,
These hills with sad monotony of curve,
Fixed by long Winter in perpetual frown?

Or in these men and women, fashioned most
In features of an undelightful mould,
Ardent in all that shows self paramount,
Where self should melt and mingle, hard and cold.

With pitiless remembrance of the faults
That God and Time pass over leniently,
These on a brother's blemishes confer
The demon's gift of immortality.

I have seen saintly blood that, long congealed,
At some prayer-hallowed festival would melt
From deathless virtue in the heart it fed,
And latent love, forgotten ne'er, once felt.

Methought that in those drops, by fervent heat
To life and ancient charity renewed,
Were pulses, human holier than could thrill
Through the whole current of your watery blood.

Oh! sordid life—oh! conflict desperate,
Oh! comfort shredded from a scanty hand;
Oh! fainting feeble ones, who drop beside
The thorny way, and wail throughout the land.

Though I am one whom men care not to praise,
And in the ages' service make small show,
I could for you a thankless task assay,
In your defence strike many a valorous blow.

Ye asked for love—these gave you fiery zeal,
They locked your gentle souls in iron fate;
And when the breast was bared for nearer help,
They smote you with a heart impenetrate.

Come, share the freer gifts of poverty,—
Of those I have, I will refuse you none,
Upbraid you from no Stoical retreat
Of Virtue more ambitious than your own.

Take my poor treasures—they are quickly told—
A soul whose tears and laughter breathe of song;
A mournful humour, and a merry wit,
A heart that harbours no distemper long;

And higher helps, as beacons set, to guide
In this night-world, where ev'n the wisest grope,
Sisters twin-hearted, dear maternal joys,
The dead, the distant—nearer, Home and Hope.

POST SCRIPTUM.

When thus I reasoned of the Beautiful
My vexed and querulous thought had not outgone
The comfort of the since instructing years,
Nor thy fair face, my last and gentlest-born.

Thou dost the Eastern paradox reverse.
Towards the far mountain-tops I could not flee,
Whereon the heavenly vision seemed to rest—
And waiting, Beauty was at home with me.

AS IT SEEMS.

Two faces, once familiar, that again
Snatch silent greeting, with a crowd between;
But they long parted—set on heights of Time
That gulfs divide, and constant shadows screen.

The veil of separation rent in twain,
Their eyes as in a dim cathedral met,
Whose arches from the swiftly pairing years
Its crystals from the glow of Hope, were set.

Its Saints, the holy figures of the Dead,
Fleeting, yet fixed as Love, the ever-true;
While, glimmering, thro' the ruined portal shows
Like a far dream, Youth's sunny sky of blue.

Iconoclastic Fortune spares the hut—
The toil-browned peasant, and his patient wife,
With little scope of sorrow or desire,
Live out their harmless, vegetative life.

But we, who strove to raise a pile on high
Fit to embrace the organ-tone of Time,
Who gave to weightiest thoughts an upward lift,
Laying broad reasons, rounding rhyme to rhyme,

Stand thunder-smitten, yet with stern command
To bear Life's devastations, since our fall
That else were solemnly desired, should bring
Our gentle Parasites to ruin, all.

For theirs is Beauty's office—she must fling
Her glowing mantle o'er all havoc made ;
Soothing Decay with tireless services
That cannot be commanded, nor repaid.

AS IT IS.

My soul is weary of this chant of woe
Where rhyme attends on rhyme, as tear on tear;
I sit beside the waning lamp, and wait
Some vigorous voice to break the spell of fear.

Slow lustres lead us from the wild surprise
Of early sorrows—stranger following strange,
Till in th' uncertain, billowy waste we see
No law save this, of unsubstantial change.

In Childhood's Eden, Ill was ill at ease,
The swift irruption of some demon foe,
But the Grief-serpent fastens on the soul—
Thenceforth the struggle to our life we owe.

Fate, that can raise a beggar to a throne,
Mocks him and thee, can rob as well as give;
From every lov'd possession thou mayst learn
That thou canst be bereft of it, and live.

A Queen, whose airy footsteps spurned the ground,
Whose fingers were too fair for daintiest lips,
Mends her worn kerchief for a felon's end,
Scarce wondering at the desolate eclipse.

Or men to life by keen enjoyment wed,
On th' unpitying wheel stretched suddenly,
Tease the pale headsman for the boon withheld
Of Death, their torture hunger's luxury.

We who aspire to harmonies divine,
Taxing Creation for its master-tone,
Soaring to heights untenable and crazed
Were once the daring inspiration gone;

Let us be modest—we are rich to win
One jewel from the treasure-laden deep,
Or, from the wreck of affluent loves, to hold
A single faithful breast whereon to weep.

A breast to weep upon? oh! this at least,
I cried, with outstretched arm, and sudden wail;
Experience shuts our asking with one hope,
Trust in thyself, and God, who cannot fail.

A VISION OF MONTGOMERY PLACE.

Who knocks at Dr. Wendell's door?
Who waits with patient feet
For "aloes, pil et colocynth,"
Or "Rhubarb, tincture sweet?"

Who knocks? the many little ones
In whom his home rejoices,
Desert their play, and crowd to peep
With eager eyes and voices.

"What if 'twere Santa Claus, arrived
With weighty load of toys,
With dolls for little maids' delight,
And rods for rampant boys?"

Then, peering thro' the glass, they see
By the uncertain light,
What seems the very soul of frost
Set in the silent night.

"Nay, do not fear me, little ones,
I have no ill-intent;
But tell Papa an Author waits
And eke, a penitent."

The children to the study run,
The father comes straightway;
But argues, ere he draws the bolt:
"Give me your name, I pray.

"You Authors are so hot of blood,
So sensitive of skin,
One wants one's surgeon's mittens on
Before one lets you in.

"The Swan of Cambridge might you be?
Or Lowell, fresh of face,
Or Hillard, bringing palm-leaves from
His swift Italian race?

"Or Emerson, whose teeming Muse
Craved 'cantharids to eat'?"
"Nay, nay, undo the door, and see
A woman in a sheet.

"A woman in a sheet, that looks
A statue, as she stands,
And proffers you a knotted scourge
From softly folded hands."

"Pass hence, pale shade! dost take me for
A Haynau? By the Rood
I never flogged a woman yet,
And know not if I could."

With fixed regard, with rigid lip,
Replies the penitent:
"I was the saucy 'Commonwealth'—
Oh! help me to repent.

"Behind my embrasure well-braced,
With every chance to hit,
I made your banner, waving wide,
A mark for wayward wit.

"'Twas now my turn to walk the street,
In dangerous singleness,
And run, as bravely as I might,
The gauntlet of the press.

"And when I passed your balcony
Expecting only blows,
From height of vantage-ground, you stooped
To whelm me with a rose.

"A rose, intense with crimson life
And hidden perfume sweet—
Call out your friends, and see me do
My penance, in the street."

"Oh no!" the Doctor shivering cried:
"The night is very cold;
Step in, or on the threshold here
My lesson shall be told.

"We sat as critics, in those days,
High-talking, wondrous wise,—
We meet as poets now, and look
With more synthetic eyes.

"The critic is allowed to rule
The common law of art—
The poet takes his judgment from
The pleading of the heart."

FROM THE LATTICE.

Let it content thee that I call thee dear—
Thou'rt wise and great, and others name thee so.
From me, what gentler tribute wouldst thou know
Than the slight hand, upon thy shoulder laid,
And the full heart, high throbbing, not afraid.

No, not afraid—of manly stature thou,
Of power compact, and temper fervor-tried,—
Yet I, a weakling, in thine armour hide,
Or, sick beyond the medicine of Art,
Hang on the healthful pulses of thine heart.

In waking dreams I see thine outstretched arms
That conquer night and distance for my sake,
Like the brave swimmer who was wont to break
The crystals of the deep in shivering light,
To bless his Ladye with his radiant sight.

There is a sense in which I call thee mine—
Not as possession runs in Youth's hot blood ;
But in the helpful, self-renunciant mood
Of Aspiration, daring, hand in hand,
Tasks that in mystical conjunction stand.

Have I not been too thoughtlessly surprised
Into this mood, so near akin to loving?
I hold myself to vexed and fond reproving;
Saying, wert thou then so eager to impart,
Thou couldst not hide one secret in thy heart?

There is a dead, immortal maiden speaks
Responsive, from the legendary tomb
That treasures, incorrupt, her bridal bloom:
"If I could wish back the advantage ta'en,
'Twere to be kind, and give it him again."

A MAID'S REQUISITION.

Dare not tell me coldly that you love me,
Smiling calm, with glittering eyes and teeth;
You might speak it, bending close above me,
With a brow suffused, and failing breath.

Is there nought of trouble and commotion
In these words, where hope and madness meet?
Deep convulsions shake the heart of ocean
When his wavelets kiss beloved feet.

Stars that shed their messages of beauty
Prisoned in the deep, impassive night?
Speak they cold and calm as Fate and Duty?
Nay—they throb out sentences of light.

But is't true, and am I better, dearer
Than Life's blossoms that around thee fall?
Never deem that words can make it clearer—
Let me feel it—tell it not at all.

IN THE VINEYARD.

I AM God's hireling, not his child beloved;
In the wide market-place I stand and wait
For the brief nod and gesture of the Fate
That motions me to weal or woe, unmoved.

Nor lives this daring in my vexéd mind,
To struggle towards him for a moment's ease,
As a babe, striving towards his father's knees,
Looks up for love in eyes unchanging kind.

"Where is thy treasure," those stern eyes should say,
"Flung to the winds with wild and haughty thrift?
What was the traffic of thy holy gift?"
And I should smother sobs, and turn away.

Yet dwells remembrance in my inmost soul,
Of happy tasks, and toil divinely glad,
When I stood armed for action ere he bade,
And, bounding at his voice, o'erstripped the goal.

Oh ! could I find him, as a child surprised,
Led by a menial thro' unwonted streets,
Makes wistful search in every face he meets,
And leaps up toward the dear one recognized.

Or, held and hastened by the Unseen hand,
Now pressing back, now swift and rude in wrath,
Look up, where Glory shoots across my path
And see the Father for the Master stand !

Give me this vision where my feet shall stop,
Spurning no more the earth's resistless round ;
Where Will and Courage reach their viewless bound,
And pausing, let the passive body drop.

Grant me, that moment, the great thought of thee,
Then, leave me life, or nothingness at will,
Beyond this prayer, are Faith and Reason still,
For that one moment is Eternity.

THE WOLF WITHIN THE MOTHER'S SHEEP-FOLD.

The black wolf waited for my pretty Lamb,
Watching some careless hour to seize his prey,
I traced his lurking footsteps every where,
Nor dared to gather hope from his delay.

The little one was loath to leave her play,
And mocked with smiles the mournful looks of each;
Wildly she thrust the arm of help away,
And, faint in breath, grew wayward in her speech.

The mother could not weep and durst not pray,
Knowing what grief can happen here below;
She calmed herself in spasms, envying most
The dead, the childless, all who shun such woe.

And, circling still, the Terrible drew near,
In swift approaches, certain of his aim,
While we, who would have died to come between,
Could only look, as on a desperate game.

And narrower grew the margin of our hope,
The victim struggling in half-conscious pangs;
Till, when the wild wolf's midnight hour had come,
At the fair throat he struck, with deadly fangs.

But then, the radiant shepherd intervened,
With arms divine, to ward the savage blow;
He raised our darling from her death-like swound,
And, with one gesture, sped th' insatiate foe.

Thus, the dark terror passed at break of day,
And on the mother's heart came sudden change;
She had been fain to measure with a look
That gulf of anguish—now, delight seemed strange.

But since that blest deliverance, in her child,
Another's treasure lent, she seems to hold;
The shepherd's touch has left the shining sign
That marks the sinless, numbered in his fold.

Anon with trembling joy the mother pleads
For her sweet idol 'gainst the claim divine;
Then, vanquished, lays her anxious weapon down,
Saying only, "Take me too, if she be thine."

THE LAMB WITHOUT.

WHENE'ER I close the door at night,
And turn the creaking key about,
A pang renewed assails my heart—
I think, my darling is shut out.

Think that, beneath these starry skies,
He wanders, with his little feet;
The pines stand, hushed in glad surprise,
The garden yields its tribute sweet.

Thro' every well-known path and nook
I see his angel footsteps glide,
As guileless as the Pascal Lamb
That kept the Infant Saviour's side.

His earnest eye, perhaps, can pierce
The gloom in which his parents sit;
He wonders what has changed the house
And why the cloud hangs over it.

He passes with a pensive smile—
Why do they linger to grow old,
And what the burthen on their hearts?
On *him* shall sorrow have no hold.

Within the darkened porch I stand—
Scarce knowing why, I linger long;
Oh! could I call thee back to me
Bright bird of heaven, with sooth or song!

But no—the wayworn wretch shall pause
To bless the shelter of this door;
Kinsman and guest shall enter in,
But my lost darling never more.

Yet, waiting on his gentle ghost,
From sorrow's void, so deep and dull,
Comes a faint breathing of delight,
A presence calm and beautiful.

I have him, not in outstretched arms,
I hold him, not with straining sight,
While in blue depths of quietude
Drops, like a star, my still "Good-night."

Thus, nightly, do I bow my head
To the Unseen, Eternal force;
Asking sweet pardon of my child
For yielding him in Death's divorce.

He turned away from childish plays,
His baby toys he held in scorn;
He loved the forms of thought divine,
Woods, flowers, and fields of waving corn.

And then I knew, my little one
Should by no vulgar lore be taught;
But by the symbols God has given
To solemnize our common thought;

The mystic angles, three in one,
The circling serpent's faultless round,
And, in far glory dim, the Cross,
Where Love o'erleaps the human bound.

THE SHADOW THAT IS BORN WITH US.

One said to me : reveal the untold grief
Thou holdest, treasured in the inmost deep ;
I have experience that may counsel thee,
A heart to pity—ready eyes to weep—

I see the cruel furrows in thy face,
The cheek depressed, the wan and cheerless eye ;
I ask thee wherefore—"'tis that I am sad"—
But wherefore sad? Sit here, and tell me why.

I can but tell thee ; I have tried to frame
The legendary sorrows of my youth ;
Then wondering paused, as at a fiction strange ;
I spoke in fables—deeper lay the truth.

I've made impatient efforts to uplift
In words, the weight that hung upon my soul ;
Oh ! senseless—while I battled with the air,
Here lay the burthen, undisturbed and whole.

Mine is no grief that helps itself with tears,
Or in wild sobbing passes from the breast;
Constant as Fate, inalienate as life,
'Tis my employ of day, my nightly rest.

It is a strife that heeds no set of sun,
A discord daring and irresolute,
A weary business without Sabbath pause,
A problem ever endless to compute.

Nor hand of leech nor surgeon can avail
To heal the plague-spot, hopeless of relief,
The suicidal steel could reach it not;
I sometimes deem, myself is all my grief.

They say, my mother brought me forth in tears,
And fed me from a melancholy breast;
Thus while she sleeps, her sorrow lives in me,
A tie the envious grave has not suppressed.

But Heaven that gave such matter to my life,
Denied not love of art, nor plastic skill;
I mould an angel from the sombre mass,
That, deeply bronzine, is an angel still.

Content thee then, the secret of my life
Not ev'n to Love's true hearing may belong,
Only to His who set, to keep my lips,
His guardians twain, of Silence and of Song.

A MAN'S STORY.

In the sad, long years, the estranging
That lie, like a sombre screen
Twixt thy lawless, impassioned ranging,
And quiet that since hath been;
I have heard of an heart whose loving
Turned ne'er from thy perilous wake,
Outdaring the world's reproving,
And anguish of death for thy sake.

Now, as thou sit'st silent beside me,
While the sunset draws near its end,
And the down of the evening may hide me,
Speak tenderly, friend to friend.
While the fading mountains before thee
Call the heights of thy wandering back,
Recount me the love she bore thee,
That failed not, for wrench or rack.

She laid her soft hand in my bosom,
She bowed her young head at my feet;
She strewed with wild beauty and blossom
The ways we rehearsed to meet.
She withered in my displeasure,
Was humblest before my praise,
She lavished her heart's best treasure,
Unconscious of years or days.

She thought to afford me only
The worship that was my due,
A rapture intense and lonely,
That endless time should renew;
To sit in her place and behold me
Transfigured, as some fair star,
With a heart leaping up to enfold me,
Was a dream that she followed far.

But, as beacon replies to beacon,
So Love answered back to Love.
Towards her blind unreasoned seeking
My soul in its might did move;
The might of a man in his willing,
That stays not for law or bound,
That strides to its rash fulfilling,
Then glances, aghast, around.

We met, and the shock astonished,
But my arms were about her then;
By my fervent pleading admonished,
She smiled, and took heart again.
Thenceforth, as the moon in her glory
Keeps heaven, through the storm-cloud's gloom,
She carried her torchlight before me,
Steadfast, till death and doom.

The world made the struggle that followed,
A wreck lies astrand on its shore,
Where wild wrath of wild powers swallowed
Love's treasures forevermore—
When the terrible sequel o'ertook her,
I felt, and was pained in her pain,
But as Prudence decreed, I forsook her,
To comfort her, never again.

Between us, a silence of torment,
That each is disdainful to break,
That fretteth the soul as a garment,
That stingeth the heart, like a snake—
Should we meet, no sweet spasm of yearning,
No startle of thrilling surprise,
Our sad eyes are lowered, discerning
The grave where the best of us lies.

THE LIGHT FALLEN.

A FRIEND was stricken from my life—
I found no word to sob or say;
One shiver marked the severed nerve,
And I walked silent on my way.

But from the bosom of my faith
I missed its soul of loveliness,
And, musing in my steps, I said:
What unblest vacancy is this?

What light hath fall'n from soul and sky
Whose absence should afflict so sore
That I discern no heaven on high,
Within, no living Saviour more?

I dreamed not how my worship hung
On human features, till that day
That showed th' ideal presence gone,
And life's sweet Christ entombed for aye.

THE TWO STARS.

I, THE Mistress of the Valley,
In the twilight soft and dim,
Hold the headway of my fancies
'Gainst the evening shadows grim.

In the distance strives the streamlet
With the neighbor's rustic flute,
In the boughs the breeze doth nestle,
And all other things are mute.

In the little, silent cottage
Where, as to the palace door,
Comes the sunshine, every morning,
To be slowly darkened o'er;

Gathered lie the pretty babies,
In the silken snood of sleep,
While the angels keep above them,
Folded wing and noiseless sweep.

Straight before me rise twin hillocks
Like to brothers, matched in size,
Shutting out the distant landscape,
And the flush of evening skies.

While the doubtful face of heaven
Looks beyond me and above,
As with one red eye of justice,
And one lenient eye of love.

Far to Sight though near to Reason,
The new risen moon appears,
Like a martyr-scar of glory
Shining through eternal years.

So! be merciful, thou Heaven!
Do not crush me as I stand
In the dark and narrow defile,
With the hills on either hand.

Where the shadows grew perplexing,
And no outlet was to see,
Bear this witness to my weakness,
That my striving was to thee.

Smile upon my latest struggle,
Tenderly my fault reprove,
With thy fiery eye of justice,
And thy lenient eye of love.

A WORD WITH THE BROWNINGS.

I AM told you do not praise me, Barret Browning, high-inspired,
Nor you, Robert, full of manhood, with your Angel interlyred;
In my sometime invocation of the poet-brotherhood,
'Twas a word from you I wanted, in a word, a sentence,—good.

'Twas your Worships I stood greeting, as I waited, cap in hand,
On the unattainèd excellence, and far-loved Motherland;
Of the best things and remotest, you, the spirit-types so fair—
I appealed to you, forgetful of the friends that nearer were.

But no word came o'er the water, though I strained my
listening ear;
Had they known the need so urgent, they had sent a
shout of cheer.
That had been an alms, and not a right, discomforting
always—
God forbid that holy Pity should grow faithless, moving
Praise.

Praise is of the awful voices, of the face whose smile
or frown
Helps the martyr to his glory, casts the laurelled tyrant
down;
For the scales that weigh men's actions, measure too
the poet's song,
And the hidden thoughts of Justice to Eternity
belong.

Keep your counsel, poet-household, ye, the mystic one
in three,
Strength of man with love of woman, and the king,
Futurity—
Ye shall hear my fond upbraidings, if ye hold your
Winter's reign
By the' Casa Guidi windows, or the swarming banks
of Seine.

Think how little is in Nature, if in littleness of eye,
You resume it from your chamber, or your carriage, rolling by;
Merely shabby ancient mountains, and a tiresome old sea,
Slow the rivers, dull the forest, adding weary tree to tree.

'Tis not yours, this idle strophe, but in all that you have seen,
Does no inward grace add splendor to the purple, and the sheen?
Wants there not a generous spirit for the finer joys of sight?
Heart must help the scenes around us, ere they minister delight.

I remember summer mornings in a village poor and mean,
With a railroad running near it, and a living oaken screen;
When the Girlhood gathered round me, a decorous little band,
As I read with fervent feeling, and your volumes in my hand.

Read the "Blot upon the Scutcheon," and the suit for
"Geraldine;"
"Paracelsus" and "Sordello," and "The Gondola"
between,
Read the "Drama of the Druses," leaving not a mystic
sense
That uplift your friends to wonder, in the praeter-
perfect tense.

Read with forefinger extended, with a fixed and furrow-
ing brow;
With a voice that wept your pathos, or upheld your
triumphs now;
And the white-robed ones drew nearer, and grew very
loath to leave,
For the warning bell of Noontide, or the shadowy nod
of Eve.

Oh! I made it clear before them, with a mild ingenious
brain
Wound your tangled fancies smoothwise, brought your
vanished thought again,—
When they puzzled o'er the volumes, 'twas another
thing, they said;
Tried a page or two, and left it, with some aching of
the head.

One, the noblest and the dearest, in my heart her worship lies,
Nought forbids my lips to name her, save her meek remembered eyes,
Said, "the verses you transfigured cannot touch me as before,
Could they keep the soul you gave them, I would read them evermore."

I was happier in those mornings, when my voice, still keeping youth
That had fled my wayward features, gave you nobly, in your truth,
And there seemed a natural fitness twixt the burthen and the tone,
Than when wider walls gave echo to a music all my own.

Or it might be at a banquet, one who sits to satirize
Called you up to suffer judgment, I to help your obsequies;
You had cracked his teeth with harshness, urged the man I need not name.
"Sir, you do not understand this," cried your champion, all aflame.

Had you questioned my endeavour with the overflowing heart
That gives tender recognition to the uncrowned child of Art,
Had you stood before the temple, as the heavenly donors stand,
Stooping to bestow your largesse, you had grasped a Sister's hand.

But the Sister still, unbidden, towards your distant faces turns,
Still pursues your hallowed friendship, which some nobler duty earns.
Even to wait, afar, unrecognized, is pleasure wiling pain;
For I hear you, and I answer you, again, and yet again.

ONE WORD MORE WITH E. B. B.

I CAN but fill the page I owe
With pictures of the things I see.
I pause to feel the noontide glow,
And bless what God ordains to be.

This tireless harmony of life,
Impulse and weight divinely poised;
This upward flight of Thought and Love,
These slow perfections, recognized.

And could I ask, it were to heal
The struggles of this Mother-mould,
That flings us flaming, from its breast,
That hides our ashes, spent and cold.

I could implore great gifts of Peace
To ransom grief-embittered hearts,
That self might sink, that Wrath might cease,
And Plenty speed the genial Arts.

There are who thread unmeasured heights
With spirits for their body-guard,
Who vex with ill-directed flight,
And sentence, mystical, and hard.

I shrink before the nameless draught
That helps to such unearthly things,
And if a drug could lift so high,
I would not trust its treacherous wings;

Lest, lapsing from them, I should fall,
A weight more dead than stock or stone,—
The warning fate of those who fly
With pinions other than their own.

The steady spheres of God outvie
The fitful meteors of the brain;
These may be wanting to our need,
To those, we never look in vain.

We sleep in grief, or watch in pain,
Or crushed with guilty burthens lie;
We rise to meet th' unfailing stars
That smile forgiveness loftily.

So Dante, from his dreadful way
Emerging, new in fear and awe,
The heavenly signal recognized,
And stood to bless th' eternal law.

I lift my waning sight to them,
Unchanged thro' all these changing years,
And, strong in friends that cannot fail,
Forget my errors, leave my tears.

DANTE.

He wore an honest hatred on his sleeve,
Of red oppression and inhuman wrong;
Brief pause he made to question or to grieve,
But, singing his incomparable song,
Wove each great stanza of his life along.

His hands were pure from gold, his heart from guile,—
Could the fixed features deign to wear a smile,
It must have been the gala of some deed
Whose doer's guerdon rested in that meed
Most, tho' approving angels wept the while.

In his immortal heart such virtue lies
Of Love, that builds the shrine it consecrates,
That who pursues the passion to the gates
Whose music shuts out the uncertain Fates,
Beholds it, deathless, in his Lady's eyes.

Dante was lovelorn in his youthful days,
With amorous wanderers fain to pass his time ;
Nor only thus knew he those devious ways
Set in the glory of his antique rhyme,—
So much at least, his Legendary says,

Seeking excuse. But this is further said :
He was no Wanton —Eager Beauty laid
Her ambush for him, from the laurel grove
She darted, with his solemn traits in love,
And in his breast her glorious capture made.

Or swifter, Sorrow, with her eyes on fire,
Their red glow ravished from her hollow breast,
Laid her thin grasp upon the Poet's vest,
Till, at her tale of agony confessed,
Fainted the heart, and fell the wailing lyre.

Rest, mid sepulchral marbles, dim and cold,
Setting the lamp that saw thee over-wrought
With thine unearthly subject—labour fraught
With distant blessing, since our ages hold
Their mirror to the greatness of thy thought.

MOONLIGHT.

Soft the all-embracing moonlight,
Holds the lone one in its arms,
And the nerves, high strung to sorrow,
With its lambent touch disarms.
From its softness I could model
Many an image fair and free,
But to-night I yield this power,
It shall work its will on me.

Oh! this weary human longing
For companions all mine own,
Oh! these eyes bereft of beauty,
Oh! this ear, unblest of tone!
Oh! these lips that, prest to marble
Turn to marble with its cold,
Oh! these dreams, whose empty thronging
Leaves the heart, all unconsoled, —

Could a dove caress the silence
With the healing of her wings;
Could some dear-bought heavenly treasure
Stand for earth's belovèd things;
Through the gracious ministration
Of the gentle summer night,
Free of shadows, blest in longing,
I could soar to life and light.

THE PRISONER OF HOPE.

As Samson in the temple of his foes—
Be patient in the hand that crushes thee,—
'Twere but one sudden struggle, one wild throe;
Like the blind Anarch, thou wert venged and free.

This deadly power discerning in thyself,
Keep guarded from the slow match of desire;
Who disembosoms the volcanic Earth
Shall not forget to loose the latent fire.

So in an atom lies the Infinite,
Concentred thou mayst deem it, not confined;
So in the narrow prison of thy life
Be conscious of the boundless scope of mind.

Wherever truth can beckon, Thought can spring
Setting her wingèd steps on whirling spheres;
She gains the upper calm—the height serene,
And sees below, the pent domain of tears.

Stript of thy happier attributes of birth,
The virtue of thy race is left thee still,
If, comprehending all the scope of bliss,
Thy liberty be larger than thy will.

HIGH ART.

So, friends, you see my picture brought to end
With labor manifold of eye and hand,
And that whose slaves they are, the master-brain.
Great Angelo's Last Judgment I've reversed,
And Hell on Earth is what I have to show.
The subject is more homelike than you think,
The scenes we move in gave the atmosphere,
The whole is painted from what 's next at hand.

You see the emblems of the time and place
Foreshadowed in the City's household Gods—
An elm that offers hanging, to my mind,—
Spires like to lightning-rods of heavenly grace,
Whose services are merely possible;
That fire, too, has a fashion of its own,
And might consume an unprotected soul,—
With groupings of the granite piles that stand
For Babel's pride, without her gift of tongues.

Most of your number claim some feature here,
Some act or gesture, woven with my toil.
You, Madam, seize upon the hair and brow
So golden-placid in this pardoning Saint—
They 're yours indeed, but here the likeness ends.
Your eyes, you see, were not the spirit sort,
Your mouth, a pursed conventionality ;
More than one weary morning's work it took
To help what was forgotten in your making.
That Matron, so familiar to our ken,
Who loves her scandal raw as English beef,
And, so she gets her pound of shivering flesh,
Is little careful how she comes by it ;
You 'll know her, by her slab and jaunty air,
Her spiteful feathers, and her glossy back ;
But aught so worthless as her countenance
Art does not keep, so that is turned elsewhere.

You, addle-pate with diamonds in your gift ;—
You, not of God, but Babbage, clever thing
To calculate, and add, and multiply,—
And you, poor Wagling, striking baldly now
At follies you have supped on, in your time,
I've shadowed with an artist's charity.
But you, stage-villain of some tragedy

That shudders through the smoothness of your face;
Thank God, Sir, by the bending of your knees,
I do not show you in my pillory
For gentler fools to gape at, and contemn!

And this veiled figure that dishevelled flies,
Or beats back scorn with scorn, or weeps at pity,
It has the face no second-sight can show.

What—it mislikes you? I've allowed myself
Some freedoms? Yes—a painter's privilege;
To put on canvas what you would not show
If you could help the same, being 'ware of it.
I've made a Bandit of a bearded wretch
By dashing courage in his vacant eyes.
That persecuting Jew is horrible?
He worships weekly at a Christian shrine.
I've clothed in scarlet one whose worldly dress
Is a prim rainbow of proprieties,—
I let the scarlet of her soul strike through
The drab decorum, as another drew
The fiery Corday, going to her death,
Draped in the hue of her impetuous blood.
I've suited Harpies claws to well-bred hands,
And put the snake-wreath for the snaky tongue.

Well—but I want a picture, as you know,
And your strong points came excellently in,—
For men and women of the best repute
Make cheats, thieves, cut-throats, with a little aid.

So, you have helped me to a work of Art,
And, without pains of yours, to men's remark—
Oh! take elsewhere your favor, if you will—
But what you 've taught me, in your own despite,
I keep for my own uses, and the world's.
Go—sit to every artist save the Sun—
For, hark ye, as a friend—it were not wise
To tempt his rendering of your facial text.

And, now I think of it, your wrath assists
A project that has grown on me, of late—
For, having quartered in your haunts so long
That I have got your wickedness by heart,
What choice is left me, but an hermitage,
Where converse of the calm immortal souls
Shall help your poison with its antidote,
Till Art be purged of grief and bitterness.
I'll build its walls of sturdy monoliths,
(Faiths without dogmas—Mother-sciences.)
Apocalyptic Hope shall ceil the roof

With visions that were with me from my birth,—
I'll teach the door a watchword of my own
That shall forbid its turning—here I'll work,
With earnest toil, the ransom of my years,—
Till Death, stern friend that cannot be denied,
Shall enter noiseless, to depart with me.

PRELUDE.

He could not close his weary eyes
Because she chid him, ere she slept;
He left his bed at morning rise,
And through the streets uneasy swept,
Waiting till slumber's truce should cease,
And she might give the sign of peace.
Shall she be proud? oh no—
It is not she, but Love
That moves the great heart so.

She gave it, and he bent his head,
The head that bears the massy curls,
And pressed the lips, so lustrous red,
The full lips, set with stainless pearls,
With fervour on the thin, weak hand,
That holds nor prowess, wealth, nor land.
Shall she be proud? oh no—
Not by her word, but Love's,
The pulse-beats come and go.

And when I try, beneath this sun,
All exploits that o'erleap the grave,
I find by Will they were not done,
Nor Wealth, nor Wisdom chose nor gave.
Some higher Potency begot
The Virtue's self that knew it not.
Shall we be proud? oh no?
Not from ourselves, but Love,
Immortal actions flow.

ODE.

Wherefore, great Love, to thee
I bend the duteous knee,
The homage of the heart devoutly paying;
Thou, greatest, first, and best,
Lord of the human breast,
None vainly slighteth thee in deed or saying.

Not in the childish guise
Where thy transcendent eyes
O'erleapt the heathen heaven's soft surrounding,
Nor in the wood-nymph's dress,
With lusty gagliardesse
Of Satyrs from the tangled thicket bounding.

But with the awful brow,
The still, hushed presence thou,
The eyes that darken not the world with weeping,
The hand that never fails
To match the golden scales
With the heart wealth, left countless to thy keeping.

Thou from the infant's birth
To the last day of earth
With tireless skill each fateful action fitting;
A genius at his side,
Divine to rule and guide,
Nor overcome at last, thro' fall and flitting;

Thou, at the classic feast
By garlands unappeased,
Responding not to fondest invocation
Of youthful votaries,
Till holy Socrates
Uplift their hearts to thine eternal shining.

Mute at the high command,
The solemn voice and hand,
Loud mirth and tipsy jollity sink under;

The dim eyes strain to see
Thy far off sanctity,
Then turn to other eyes, suffused with wonder.

My pæan too shall sound,
And my glad feet rebound
From this dark orb, our chequered fortunes rolling,
Where my faint heart lay prone,
Up to thy starry zone,
As the bird flies, by Nature's sweet controlling.

But thou rebuk'st us too,
For all our wild ado,
The want, the waste, the weary fault and fretting;
How mad the turmoil seems,
When, in our waking dreams,
Thou sham'st it with the presence past forgetting.

Be piteous to our sins,
Where thought of thee begins,
And on thy hallowed ground we tread unknowing;
Are ravished far away
To unknown night and day,
Scared with dim heights, and viewless torrents flowing.

A thousand phantoms claim
Allegiance in thy name,
And we, unhappy, take the lead they give us,
While in thy sacred bounds,
Illuminate with wounds,
Slow smiling sweet, thou waitest to receive us.

There, where no dust nor damp
Quench thine unfailing lamp,
Suffer, oh Infinite, that we behold thee;
And kiss thy feet, with tears
Hoarded thro' painful years,
And with the wealth of loosened locks engold thee.

Like priceless ointment shed
On some belovèd head,
Let the mute worship of our hearts come o'er thee,
Till, ravished with thy sight,
Transfigured in thy light,
Our human baseness faint and die before thee.

ADÉ.

A truce, a truce, a gallant truce!
A hand flung up, and a shout of cheer;
The toiling hand that has sped and spun
The labor of the year.

Farewell, ye turbulent hosts of rhyme,
Whose wrangling wrought such ill-content,
Farewell, ye beggarly broken lines,
A Falstaff regiment.

The sour and sweet I could not taste
Till ye had sat and drunk your fill;
The life I bore was never mine,
But yours to waste at will.

Oh! yon, where the sunset's heart is warm
A fair bird singeth, sorrow-free;
I am his Sister belov'd, he says,
And, wistful, he waits for me.

No bird of Juno's nor of Jove's,
Nor Pallas, blinking thro' day-shut eyes;
But a mate-dove, loving so faithfully,
That Love did make him wise.

And we will sit as on burnished gold,
The earth-ball rolling at our feet,
And whisper of things which, had they been,
Had been for song too sweet.

By the Author of this Volume.

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